



## Thoughts on Tackling Dummies

In Hindu cosmology, the universe cycles between birth and death every 4.3 billion years. Each aeon is referred to as a kalpa. At the end of each kalpa, the Hindu god, Shiva, known as The Destroyer," annihilates everything and the cycle repeats.

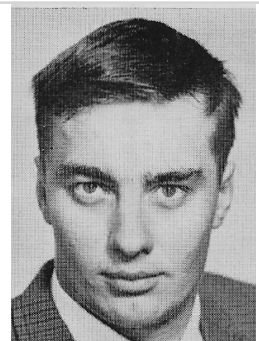


In the early 1970s, a seminal period for me, I listened to an album by Alan Watts, a British philosopher and proponent of Eastern religious traditions. When I heard Watts' description of Hinduism I was intrigued. To understand more deeply I started reading the Upanishads - a series of philosophical dialogs dealing with central weltanschauung of Hinduism. Weary of Cartesian dualism, I found the Atman, the Oneness of the Hindu tradition more plausible.

**"Active desire, unless roasted by wisdom, merely plants new desire."**

As a shallow college athlete bouncing from bad habit to worse, I was sorely in need of roasted wisdom. But where to get it? I decided to employ the Upanishad method - engage in a spirited dialog. As Watts noted: *"No work or love will flourish out of guilt, or hollowness of heart, just as no plans for the future can be made by those who have no capacity for living now."*

I wanted desperately to live in the now. But a dialog requires someone willing to engage, to exchange.



Enter one of the most decent human beings I've had the pleasure knowing, a fellow offensive tackle on the squad - a *no-bullshit* Bulldog by the name of Tom Swiderski. Tom's a gentle giant, standing well over six feet. A quiet man, he's not given to ostentation. Off the field, his demeanor was harmonious, but come game day he was ferocious. He was just the guide I was looking for.





When I broached the idea of holding an ongoing conversation about these matters Tom nodded, asking, *“How might we proceed.”*

*“Perhaps we use the quiet time just before practice starts.”*

Swiderski and I were always first into the locker room each day, and the earliest to go out on the practice field.

*“We could use the time before Coach and the rest of the team show-up to discuss these concepts,”* I suggested.

*“Life is unstable as water on the lotus leaf. If you’ve enthusiasm for knowledge, do not wait,”* Tom responded.

From that point on, each day Swiderski and I would leave the locker room ahead of the others. We’d drag two battered blocking dummies from the equipment shed, flopping down on the threadbare canvas lounges.



We accepted the obvious disparity; confining helmets and our freeing thoughts. Challenged by paradox we knew - there is never anything but the present. If one cannot live there, one cannot live anywhere.

*First to vanish is ignorance;  
When that is gone,  
desire ceases, selfishness ends,  
and all misery disappears.*

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One autumn day, we wandered out for practice, adorned in full battle gear. Shoulder pads, hip and knee pads, ankles taped ... our full countenance enveloped in sweaty protection. I suspected it was all illusion. As we lazed, an easy dialog commenced.

*“Tommy, I’m wondering. Perhaps what we earnestly believe to be real is mere charade.”*

Swiderski replied tellingly.

*“Paradoxical as it may seem, the so-called purposeful life has no content, no point. It hurries on - misses everything. Conversely, not hurrying, the purposeless life misses nothing, for it is only when there is no goal that human senses are fully open to receive the world.”*

Suddenly, Coach’s whistle jerked us back into the here and now. I remembered what Alan Watts said: *“You” is the universe looking at itself from billions of points of view, points that come and go so that the vision is forever new.”*



